

THE EXTERNALIST AND THE AMORALIST

JAMES LENMAN

1. Externalism: The Issue

I want to consider the claim that it makes sense to suppose somebody might make moral judgements¹ which leave her *indifferent*, a claim I will call, following extensive precedent, *externalism*. The most significant recent defence of this view and the main target of this paper is found in David Brink's recent *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. The opposite view, that it is *not* possible to be indifferent to moral judgement, is *internalism*.

One way of stating internalism is that moral judgements necessarily *suffice* to motivate us to action. That, as it stands, is simply false. We gain in plausibility by supposing this motivation *defeasible*, thus capturing those cases — of moral weakness and so forth — where the motivational force of such judgements is defeated. Here we may follow Brink and distinguish *strong* internalism whereby to make a moral judgement *suffices* to motivate someone to action from *weak* internalism whereby all that is necessary is that it provide *some* motivation.² My present aim is to defend *weak* internalism.

On the most plausible version of weak internalism, to make a moral judgement involves having some *desire* that favours, perhaps *inter alia*, any course of action that judgement entails. A *desire* here might be a second or higher order desire. Indeed it may, let us suppose, be any noncognitive state that is at least *of a kind* with desire in that its content is not intended to match the world, the aim being rather that the world match the content: in terminology that now enjoys wide currency it has *world-word direction of fit*.³ Understanding "desire" in this generous sense further weakens the internalist claim I am defending but not in the one crucial dimension. For *desire*, even in this weak and generous sense, is inconsistent with *indifference*. There is then a conceptual link

between *moral judgment* and motivation just insofar as there is — uncontroversially to my knowledge — just such a link between *desire* and motivation.

Those who accept this split into those who think a moral judgement *is* (at least in part) a desire and those who merely think desire something like a necessary *concomitant* of such judgement. *That* issue is beyond the scope of this paper to arbitrate but it is worth noting where the issue of externalism fits into the wider issue of moral realism. A central difficulty for *any* moral realist is that of explaining the rather intimate connection between moral judgement and motivation. Moral realists who are also internalists seek to overcome this difficulty; but externalist moral realists take a bolder course and deny that any such difficulty exists: the intimate connection in question is simply *not there to be explained*. My aim in this paper will be to argue that this externalist form of moral realism is false.

Any form of moral realism invites the challenge of explaining just what the belief that something is, say, good is supposed to *amount to*, just what its *content* is. Of course this challenge might be refused. The realist might choose to echo Moore's insistence that "good is good and that is the end of the matter".⁴ And of course, realism of this nonnaturalistic kind, when sufficiently purified both of empirical content and practical significance, has the obvious merit of being irrefutable, though this comes as a package with a baffling vacuity. The realist who wishes to resist this path has no option but to meet the challenge head on, perhaps the fundamental ground for suspicion of any kind of moral realism being simply doubt that the challenge can ever be satisfactorily so met.

The suspicion, it seems to me, is well motivated but the making of a general case against realism along such lines is a demanding task I won't here be taking on. My present concern is simply with the externalist species of realism. And here the task is not so demanding. For the externalist holds that though someone may *believe* something good, it may nonetheless be the case that she *couldn't care less* about it. And the problem here is that this leaves it *wholly* mysterious how such a person effectively *differs* from someone who does not have the belief in question, what on earth the having of such a belief *amounts to*.⁵

2. Brink's Amoralist

Brink argues that we should accept externalism because the externalist can, as the internalist cannot, make room for the possibility of the *amoralist*, where the amoralist is the person we have just met—somebody who makes moral judgements which leave her *indifferent*. We should accept externalism, Brink claims, because such people are indeed possible (and indeed, he supposes, actual). This argument will be the primary focus of what follows.

We want to remember, firstly, that there are many ways in which moral judgements may motivate. If I think it is wrong to swear I might be motivated to: refrain from swearing; seek to change myself in ways that reduce my liability to swear; exhort others not to swear; raise my children not to swear; vote for the No Swearing Party — and so on. The sort of amoralist I will be considering would be motivated to do *none* of these things. Those who are subject *only* to some of these motivations might be, in some sense, *partial* amoralists, or might alternatively be convicted of a variety of forms of confusion and hypocrisy. To discuss these latter types would greatly complicate the discussion in presently inessential ways. The existence or possibility of such people is wholly consistent with weak internalism as characterised above. I therefore disregard them and focus on the amoralist whose moral judgements do not motivate her *at all*. It seems very worthwhile, however, to invite the reader who inclines to come back at me with plausible sounding descriptions of amoralism, real or imagined, to ask herself whether the case in question is not one of such selective and partial indifference.

The most straightforward response to Brink's argument is that the amoralist, as he conceives her, is *not* possible at all. This is because the amoralist may be interpreted simply as making moral judgements in what Hare calls an *inverted commas* sense, not as making *genuine* moral judgements.⁶ For to make a moral judgement in an inverted commas sense is merely to make an effectively *sociological* claim — a claim about what is conventionally deemed "morally good". And to make genuine moral judgements is to do something quite different from this. It is to make just the sort of commitment that the amoralist precisely is not making.

Brink's objection to this is just that it fails to take the amoralist "seriously enough". But this is inconclusive. For, given that we now

have a satisfactory way, consistent with internalism, of explaining the phenomenon of real, apparently amoralistic people (psychopaths, sociopaths or whatever we like to call them), why should we suppose amoralists *à la* Brink really do exist? An argument from best explanation is undercut by the contribution of a suitable alternative explanation.

Brink also insists that the amoralist is at least *conceivable*. And surely now the question is being begged. For surely the amoralist is conceivable if and only if externalism is true and that is precisely the issue.⁷ The insistence cannot be seen as a convincing argument for externalism in the absence of an adequate account of what the amoralist's supposedly genuine moral judgements *amount to*. For only then do we know what we are being invited to conceive.

3. The Idiosyncratic Amoralist

It doesn't help to insist that the amoralist not only makes moral judgements but may make *idiosyncratic* ones.⁸ Of course she may and this is quite consistent with the inverted commas understanding of the amoralist. The amoralist so understood, may very intelligibly take herself to be *better* at interpreting and applying the moral codes of a society than those who actually accept those codes (indeed it cannot obviously be ruled out that she may be right). This is no more mysterious than an atheist taking himself to be better at interpreting Scripture than believers are (and he too may well be right).

Of course we can only make this diagnosis where the idiosyncrasy is relatively *minor* and *local*. When the idiosyncrasy is very *dramatic* and more nearly *global* the diagnosis won't work. But that is far from helpful to the externalist. For if the amoralist's moral judgements were dramatically idiosyncratic at a relatively global level it would indeed become deeply puzzling what on earth she was talking about.

Perhaps the externalist thinks this fact can be accommodated. After all philosophers are used to the idea that there may be general problems, familiar from the writings of Wittgenstein and Davidson, about the very intelligibility of drastic cognitive idiosyncrasy even on uncontroversially factual matters.⁹ But the externalist's difficulty may grow if we feel we *can*, in the case of someone making genuine but idiosyncratic moral judgements, make sense of extremely dramatic (albeit arguably not total) idiosyncrasy in moral judgement, at least to

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a degree where we will incline to say the scope for idiosyncrasy is substantially *less* in the case of the amoralist.

Surely indeed, if the externalist is right, it should be *the other way around*. Because for the amoralist, were she possible at all, there would be a particular and peculiar *insulation* of her moral beliefs from her other attitudes and her actions. Whereas for a non-amoralist whose moral judgement is highly idiosyncratic the idiosyncrasy is going to *spill over* and transform his *desires* and *behaviour*. So that we would plausibly expect to reach the limits of intelligible idiosyncrasy *sooner* in the case of the idiosyncratically moral person than in that of the amoralist.

And yet the reverse is plausibly true: it is the *amoralist* the intelligibility of whose imputations of goodness will break down *first*. The point will arise where we start to ask — "if you don't mean "goodness" in an inverted commas sense *and* you don't give a monkey's about it, then what the devil are you on about? And this is just what the internalist would predict. For there is generally less scope for idiosyncrasy in the interpretation of the moral views of *others* than in the formation of *one's own*. My earlier analogy is still apt. I can intelligibly offer the weirdest story as an account of *my own* religious beliefs (the gods are a gang of malevolent tadpoles). But if I yield this story as *an interpretation of Pauline theology*, I may expect to encounter a justified lack of comprehension.

4. Global Amoralism: A Queer Story

There is a further and central difficulty with this supposed conceivability of the amoralist.¹⁰ For this seems to depend tellingly on the embedding of the amoralist in a *community* of non-amoralists. You can't be an amoralist *on your own*. And it won't do to reply that you can't really be *moral* on your own either, on the basis that morality is essentially social. For whoever said "you" just now was singular? You can't be a *group of amoralists* on your own (perhaps it sounds a bit odd to speak a *community* of amoralists¹¹). The apparent conceivability of amoralism evaporates when it is imagined *global*.

Story time. Externalism is true. There are moral facts to which one may, in principle, knowingly be indifferent. And there is a village called "Amorality" — no, let's take "global" seriously and say a *planet* called "Amorality". Here they are really *very good indeed* at ascertaining these

facts. *Much* better than we are. They're subject to a certain curiosity about what these are but otherwise they *don't care* about them. Once they have successfully detected the facts in question they make a nice scientific record of them but do not allow their discoveries about what these facts are to impinge in any way on their habits of desire and action. In the universities of Amorality there are departments, called "*morality departments*" where people called "*moral scientists*" are engaged full time to detect and record the moral facts. But this is an activity rather like the more refined branches of astrophysics or pure mathematics here on earth.¹² It's really *jolly interesting* to know what these moral facts are but it's of no practical significance whatever.

The point about this story is of course that it is a *preposterous* story. And that if externalism is true, then presumably it *shouldn't* be preposterous. Whereas if internalism is true, then presumably it is only to be expected that it be just as preposterous as it is. And the internalist is well-placed, as we will see below (section 8) to explain just *why* it is so preposterous.

5. Some Ways Not To Be An Externalist

The externalist, I have noted, owes us an account of what he thinks moral judgement amounts to. My doubt that this challenge can be met is perhaps best supported by examining various salient ways in which it may be tried. So let's first consider an externalist who espouses a fairly unsophisticated form of descriptivism. This consists in claiming an identity (which may or may not be analytic¹³) between goodness and some (at least *prima facie*) non-evaluative property, Fness.

Our externalist now goes on to suggest that while many of us are motivated to perform those acts which are both good and F (under either description), that is a wholly *contingent* fact and there is no conceptual tie between *either* goodness *or* Fness and motivation.¹⁴ It may then be claimed that some people, amoralityists, simply aren't moved *either* by the thought that something is good *or* by the thought that something is F.

The appropriate response depends on whether such an externalist holds the identity of goodness and Fness to be analytic or not. If not, if the identity is no mere matter of synonymy, we are then owed an account of what goodness is, of what is the substance of the claim that something is good, an account that is at once independent of Fness,

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independent of motivational force, non-vacuous and plausible. Such an account has never been furnished. It certainly seems odd that we should place such importance on a property of whose character we have so dim a conception.

On the other hand the externalist might allege that the identity was indeed analytic, a matter of mere synonymy. This of course has the effect of rendering the concept of goodness more or less *redundant* given our continuing possession of the non-evaluative concept of Fness; as well as rendering it more or less *irrelevant* to the sort of practical question we normally have recourse to the word "good" in formulating — we might think it practically significant that a given course of action would be a good one but, on this account, that's just a sort of accident.

This seems to be a consistent position,¹⁵ committed, to be sure, to an unintuitive reading of the word "good" but we need dispute no further what is now a mere question of lexicography. Humpty Dumpty had a point — "good" can mean that if you like. All that would still need explaining is why moral philosophers (and everybody else) should be so very interested in goodness, so understood. So understood, I very much doubt that they are.

Of course, if the exponent of such a theory is not what, on his own account, counts as an amoralist, if he indeed cares about and is moved to promote Fness, he may well want to tell us so and it would be nice to have a word handy to serve that purpose. Having no further use for it in its putatively previous meaning, might he not care to try "good"? We will all know what he means.

In the light of the foregoing we might consider another line of objection which suggests that perhaps I have begged the question in following Hare in regarding the "inverted commas" sense of moral terms as failing to make moral judgements. That, however, is just to suggest a particularly disastrous version of the last objection. For suppose someone were to take "good" simply to connote what is conventionally considered good by one's fellow men and women. Most people, we might suppose, care about the things that have this property but not everyone does. So that there are some people, amorlists, who have beliefs about goodness, so understood, but are left cold by these beliefs.

The point, is, of course, that *everybody* couldn't be like that. *Everybody* couldn't mean by "good" simply what their fellows consider

good. For then they would mean by "good" what their fellows consider *their* fellows consider *their* fellows consider... Etc. *ad infinitum*. The regress is surely vicious. And whatever "good" means it certainly isn't *that*. The point here is just that the inverted commas sense of good is entirely *parasitical* upon the existence of the stronger *internal* sense without which it would be altogether empty.¹⁶ That's *why* the story of the planet Amorality is as silly as it is.

We can elaborate on the point by considering another kind of objection. Suppose the findings of the moral scientists of Amorality somehow came to *our* attention. And suppose *we* were then very far from being indifferent to them but viewed them as having the greatest practical significance.¹⁷ Wouldn't we then be entitled to assume that what they were investigating was indeed goodness. Well, yes and no. But *yes* only in a sense which is once again entirely *parasitical* on *our own* evaluative responses.

To see this consider a parallel case. Let us suppose the alien beings who live on Amorality differ from terrestrial animals (of whom they are quite ignorant) in having nothing like the bodily function of *eating*. The scientists of Amorality, in a different group of labs, are busy investigating the mysterious and interesting property of *Gness*. Their interest is once again entirely intellectual and remote from any practical concerns. But were their findings to come (without their knowledge) to our own attention, terrestrial chefs would become rather excited. For *Gness*, it turns out, is coextensive with our own concept of *deliciousness*. But this is not to say that deliciousness is what *they* have been investigating. Deliciousness is coextensive with *Fness* which they *have* been investigating but they do not and could not investigate it — it is not one of their concepts at all.

So we would hardly say that these scientists are engaged in the making of *gastronomic value judgements* which somehow leave them indifferent. For it is only in virtue of *our own* responses to G foodstuffs that we might identify *Gness* with deliciousness. And however much the denizens of Amorality may discover about *Gness*, we can know and understand something about it that they can neither know nor understand. *We* can know that G things are *yummy*.

6. Another Way Not To Be An Externalist: The Appeal to Human Nature

A somewhat different sort of externalist might espouse a rather more sophisticated naturalism. He might try to explain this by saying he never *denied* that there was a *connection* between moral judgement and desire. All he denied was that it was an *internal, conceptual* connection. And this doesn't rule out its being a *very strong*, albeit *external*, connection. In particular, Brink suggests, the connection between moral judgement and motivation might be secured partly in virtue of what the particular *content* of moral judgement is rather than in virtue merely of its status as *moral* judgement, and partly in virtue of basic but *contingent* aspects of our nature.¹⁸ The externalist, à la Brink, wants to say that the motivational force of moral beliefs is *not independent of their content*. So that such force may only operate when we come to know what the moral facts are.

Some such story might be told in the fact of the problem I have raised over the planet Amorality. If the moral beliefs of the people of Amorality are indeed *true*, they *cannot but* motivate them; not simply because they are moral beliefs but because, as true moral beliefs, they are beliefs about some property *not analytically* tied to goodness.

Thus perhaps the externalist might tell some roughly Aristotelian story about what sorts of facts the moral facts are. This might be to the effect that moral goodness, albeit not conceptually linked to motivation, is specific to various kinds of creature and the good for a given kind of creature, human beings say, so bound up with the nature of that creature that it makes little sense to conceive of some such creature being indifferent to its known good, its own flourishing or well-being, moral goodness being (though this is not an *analytic* claim¹⁹) nothing else but that.²⁰

Having told this story, the externalist may then suggest that my story of the amoralistic planet only describes a serious possibility if we either imagine the denizens unimaginably *unlike ourselves* or the moral facts in the story unimaginably unlike the *actual* moral facts. And in either case, he may urge, it's only to be expected that things turn out looking a little unimaginable.

The externalist can have it or he can eat it. Prescinding from other reasons for scepticism about this form of moral theory, its

invocation here can only backfire on him. For to just the extent that this picture of morality explains the manifest preposterousness of such *collective* amoralism, we'd expect it to leave the *individual* amoralist looking preposterous as well. In which case, as far as concerns the argument from amoralism which it's my present concern to consider, the externalist has pulled the carpet from under his own feet. For in giving such a response, the externalist would have forgotten that the job he needs to do is to explain what he must say is the *differential* absurdity of the *collective*, in contrast with the *individual*, amoralist.

7. How Externalism Trivialises Goodness

These difficulties multiply. Let's generalize over any such stories such a sophisticated naturalist might tell and speak simply of *Fness* where this might be one's own flourishing or it might be something else. And perhaps beliefs about *Fness* cannot but motivate us. The story this externalist may be imagined telling then is this: there is a conceptual link between beliefs about *Fness* and motivation but *not* between beliefs about *goodness* and motivation. Of course, *goodness* is just *Fness* but that is not a *conceptual* truth about *goodness*. So the amoralist seems possible provided she either identifies the wrong things — non-F things — as good or, while identifying the right things as good, fails to recognize their *Fness*.

We then have *goodness* and we have *Fness*. *Goodness* is *Fness*, whatever *Fness* is. But this identity, while perhaps *necessary*, is not *analytic* or known *a priori*.²¹ Beliefs about what is F are necessarily motivating; but beliefs about *goodness* are *not*. So, just as long as the amoralist's moral beliefs are *false or confused*, she remains a possibility. In order to preserve her indifference to the good the amoralist must fail to identify the F things as good things, at any rate under the description <F>. So let F*ness be something, something *other* than *Fness*, the amoralist thinks *is* good where this thought leaves her unmoved. *Fness* on the other hand she doesn't think *good* but *beliefs about Fness* nonetheless *move* her, as is their, and her, nature.

The amoralist, so characterised, is simply weird. She is a long way from Brink's sociopath. For now she has little to disagree about with the *saint*. She thinks F* things good but this doesn't move her. The saint doesn't care about F* things either however, as it is *false* (or at least irrelevant) that these are good. The saint cares rather about

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really good things, F things. But the *amoralist* cares about these *too*. So both the amoralist and the saint care about *good things* but *not*, in the case of the amoralist, *under that description*. So when it comes to cooperating with the saint in the cause of Fness (which of course *just is* the cause of goodness), the amoralist is as ready as the next person. All that differentiates them is (a) that the saint describes the F things as good and the amoralist, although the F things are ever so important to her, does not. And indeed (b) that the amoralist may have some other beliefs about the extension of "good" — that F* things for example, are good; but, though she thinks the F* things are good, she couldn't care less — she is after all an amoralist! This is scarcely the amoralist Brink surely takes himself to have described. Indeed it now begins to look puzzling why we should want to regard amoralism as a *moral* failing at all and not simply a peculiar sort of lexicographical lapse.

This story simply highlights the absurdity of externalism. In the first place, given that the amoralist's belief that F* things are good has nothing to do with their being F (the correct understanding of the extension of "good") and that it has no impact on her desires, it remains mysterious (if an inverted commas reading is ruled out) what the *content* is of her claim that the F* things are good — if you abstract away *both* from the actual *descriptive* meaning of "good" *and* its connection with desire, what is supposed to remain? And in the second place, given that the amoralist *agrees* with the saint that the F things are terribly important in some immediately practical sense of *important*, it looks a little puzzling just what could be *missing* from this thought that differentiates it from the *saint's* thought that the F things are not just, as it were, things to be pursued, but also *good* things. But there is no puzzle here for the *internalist* who will simply urge, with the utmost plausibility, what the externalist cannot: that the concept of *importance* in this immediately practical sense, just *is* the concept of *goodness*.

So the externalist, of this sophisticated naturalist kind, faces a dilemma. He wants to deny that there is any analytic tie between beliefs about goodness and motivation. He can still explain the difficulties in conceiving at least collective amoralism by insisting that there is an analytic tie between *something else*, Fness, and motivation and then claiming a *non-analytic identity* between goodness and Fness. And he may hope that the right substituent for Fness might help explain the

differential absurdity of the collective, as opposed to the individual, amoralist. But this move will leave him exposed to the *reductio* just presented. Alternatively, he might follow the path set out in section 5 and claim *no* conceptual tie between goodness *under any description* and motivation. In which case the absurdity of the story of the planet Amorality seems inescapable and fatal.

There remains of course, as we have already seen, the option of a recourse to non-naturalism — *What is this Fness?*, some may retort. *Everything is what it is and not another thing.*²² Goodness is insistently understood as *sui generis*, with no essential tie to any even *prima facie* non-evaluative concept. Of course such non-naturalism is threatened by vacuity, as I have observed. And it faces devastating epistemological objections which it is not the concern of this paper to rehearse.²³ But paying even this price in credibility is far from leaving the externalist any *better off* in the face of the difficulties presently being raised. On such a non-naturalist's reading, the moral scientists of Amorality are to be seen as engaged in the discovery of "facts" which are of the utmost practical insignificance to them but about which we may hope to be told nothing except that they are somehow concerned with *goodness* or with *value-only* we *mustn't ask* what that *means*. Here one can only say that, if that is the best understanding of goodness we can hope for, perhaps these alien scientists are right not to care.

8. The Internalist and the Amoralist

We have seen that the externalist cannot explain the absurdity of collective amoralism in a way that does not undermine the possibility of individual amoralism as well. How is the internalist placed here? Rather nicely in fact, as I suggested at the end of section 4.

For the internalist *denies* the possibility of amoralism as the externalist understands that phenomenon. The internalist insists that insofar as the amoralist is actual or even possible, her moral judgements are merely inverted commas judgements, judgements about what is "morally good", i.e. judgements about and, as we saw in section 5, wholly parasitical upon what *other* people think morally good. And the absurdity of the story of the planet Amorality is just that *nobody* there thinks *anything* good in the primary, nonparasitical way on which the inverted commas usage depends. So that there is *nothing* for the content of the judgement that something is "morally good" (is what

other people think is morally good) to be. And this explains precisely the preposterousness of the story: for in the story the parasite has no host. Just what on earth are the people of Amoralism up to when they impute moral goodness to things? What are we meant to suppose they are doing when they busily ascertain the moral facts in the morality departments of their universities? We cannot imagine. This is no surprise for the internalist. For moral reflection is most plausibly a form of critical reflection from *within* that pattern of concern that informs our desires and actions, critical reflection upon that very pattern, those very desires, those very actions. So if we try to imagine that reflection *failing to engage at all* with that pattern, those desires, those actions, there is *nothing left* for that reflection to be.

9. Akrasia and Accidie

I will conclude by suggesting that just as the amoralist is no problem for the internalist, neither is any other figure from the philosopher's dismal gallery of moral defectives. Some see a problem here with the *akrates*²⁴ but this is only a problem for the *strong* internalist. For the whole point about the akratic, the reason why the *akrates* is such a wretched creature is just that he fails to do something he *wants* to do because that want is defeated by other motives; and the weak internalist is allowing for just this possibility.²⁵

Some too see a problem with the victim of *accidie* (a form of listlessness characteristic of depressives).²⁶ But this too is no problem for the weak internalist. Surely, the victim of *accidie*, *does* want, however ineffectually, to do as she thinks she morally ought? No? Well surely then she at least *wants to want* it. Surely there is *some* desire she has, in the generous sense of "desire" here at issue in virtue of which she *cares* whether she does what she thinks she ought, in virtue of which she is not wholly *indifferent* to this? No?

Now the opponent of weak internalism faces another dilemma: had he answered yes, the weak internalist could accommodate the case. For the latter's claim is just that moral judgement is necessarily involved with desire and hence has precisely the internal but defeasible conceptual tie to the motivation of action that *desire* has. If the answer is *no*, then the victim of *accidie* is just an *amoralist*, an amoralist of a special (perhaps temporary) kind, differing strikingly from that of

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Brink's sociopath, but an amoralist none the less. And the amoralist, we have already seen, is no real threat.²⁷

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
GLASGOW G12 8QQ
UNITED KINGDOM

NOTES

- 1 I would not wish my choice, in the interest of naturalness, of the word "judgement" to be read as begging any questions in favour of the moral realist.
- 2 See David O. Brink: *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 41-42.
- 3 See e.g. Michael Smith: *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) pp. 111 ff.
- 4 G. E. Moore: *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 6.
- 5 It is instructive in this context to recall Ronald D. Milo's 1981 paper "Moral Indifference" (*The Monist* 64) in which Grice's distinction between implication and implicature is wheeled on stage to explain the prima facie oddity Milo acknowledges to attach to cases where moral judgement is combined with moral indifference. Thus, Milo suggests, someone who says "X is wrong" ordinarily *conversationally implicates* that she does not feel indifferent about X but this is by no means *implied* by the proposition expressed by a sentence of the form "X is wrong". But this leaves us rather wondering what the latter proposition is supposed to be — what *it does* imply. The answer suggested by Milo is that the amoralist is in the business of making judgements about what is good from "the moral point of view". But now what *is that* supposed to be? Is it the point of view of the conventionally good person? — in which case the internalist's favoured reading of the amoralist is confirmed (cf. Sharon E. Sytsma: "Ethical Internalism and Moral Indifference" *Value Inquiry* 29, no.2, 1995, p.197). Or is it the point of view of the good person? — but "good" from whose point of view? If you say *my* (or *our*) point of view then you are an internalist; if you say "the moral point of view you are going round in a (very small) circle. Or is it the point of view of an ideally rational person (cf. Milo's invocation of D. A. J. Richards on p. 387)? But rational from whose point of view? As if an externalist account of *reason*

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- were any less problematic — and for the same reasons — as an *externalist* account of goodness is (cf. especially Bernard Williams' "Internal and External Reasons" in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)).
- 6 See R. M. Hare: *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 6-124, 5-163; Smith, *The Moral Problem*, pp. 67-71; Jonathan Dancy: *Moral Reasons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 5 Sytsma, "Ethical Internalism and Moral Indifference", pp. 196 ff.
 - 7 Cf. Smith *The Moral Problem*, pp. 70-71.
 - 8 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 68.
 - 9 An interesting deployment of such considerations to a metaethical context is to be found in Susan Hurley: *Natural Reasons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
 - 10 The central thrust of the argument that follows against Brink's externalism parallels points made by Simon Blackburn in discussion of that other prominent externalist Philippa Foot in his fine recent paper "The Flight from Reality" in Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence and Warren Quinn (eds.): *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
 - 11 Or perhaps not. As we will see in section 7, there is no reason why these "amoralists" might not behave in every way like good, upstanding citizens. All that is necessary is that their motivation for so behaving is not *moral* motivation. It is enough that, for almost any or indeed for no reason, they simply *want* so to behave. Of course for an internalist, and in particular for a noncognitivist, that sort of motivation might not be so readily distinguishable precisely from moral motivation. But for the externalist it had *better* be and the point of the story, of course, is to make trouble for the externalist.
 - 12 Compare P. H. Nowell-Smith on intuitionism in his *Ethics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), pp. 39ff.
 - 13 Admirers of Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (in his *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953)) may think my invocation of analyticity here and below fails to respect what Quine there showed. It is however highly contentious, particularly with respect to analyticity, just what Quine *did* there show — see, for example Hilary Putnam: "Two Dogmas Revisited" in his *Realism and Reason* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983). Even Quine, in later writings, is willing to admit that there is a clear difference between a statement like "All bachelors are unmarried" and a statement like "Some bachelors are lonesome" and sought to account for the difference (see his *The Roots of Reference* (La Salle, ILL: Open Court Publishing Ltd.,

1974) and "Two Dogmas in Retrospect" in *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 20, 1991). In the former case, Quine would say, we learn the truth of the statement by learning the use of the words it contains. In fact Quine's account seems to me unsatisfactory, omitting the dimension of the matter whereby we would treat ignorance of the truth of the former statement as *evidence* of a lack of mastery of the words — so that it is not simply, as he makes out, an accident of social uniformity that the truth of the sentence is learned in this way. In any case given that a difference between the sorts of statement typified by my examples is widely conceded the issue here is simply where, with respect to this difference, statements identifying goodness and Fness should be placed. For my present purposes the account of "analytic" given by Brink on p. 148 of *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* is altogether satisfactory.

- 14 I am indebted in my treatment of this possibility to John Benson.
- 15 Compare the "consistent naturalist" of A. N. Prior: *Logic and the Basis of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), chapter I.
- 16 One is reminded of a *Keynesian Beauty Competition* where the entrants must correctly rank a number of photographs of women in order of beauty. It is known that the criterion used by the judges to determine the correct ranking is simply to count the entrants' votes. So each entrant must thus try to guess what the other entrants will guess the other entrants will guess... Etc. In fact the present problem is rather more serious. There *can* be such competitions (and there *are* as I recently ascertained by inspecting a promotional contest on the back of a beer mat) where the entrants are not in practice at a loss. For such a competition is imagined being arranged in a world where the word "beauty" gets used in more direct ways and what one does is simply rank the photographs in order of what one judges their conventional beauty. But now imagine such a competition was the *only* language game we played with the concept of beauty and consider the total loss at which that would leave the entrants as to what they were supposed to do. And that would seem to be analogous to where we would be if we seriously thought that "good" simply meant, as it were, the same as ""good".
- 17 I owe this suggestion to Vernon Pratt. Compare Milo, "Moral Indifference", p. 389, where we find the speculation that the amoralist might be consulted by others about moral issues on which she is, albeit indifferent, recognized to be expert.
- 18 See Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, pp. 3-42, 49, 58-59, 62, 244-245.
- 19 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 163-167.

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- 20 For Brink's own Aristotelian sympathies, see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 217, 220-222, 231-236, 242-245, 278-279.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 165-166.
- 22 After Butler, *apud* Moore, *Principia Ethica*, epigraph.
- 23 For recent discussions see e.g. Smith, *The Moral Problem*, chapter 2; Crispin Wright: *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1992), chapter 4, section II.
- 24 See esp. R. M. Hare: *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1963), chapter 5. And cf. Smith, *The Moral Problem*, pp. 61, 133-134. Smith's way of dealing with *akrasia* and *accidie* is an aspect of his own version of internalism that recognizes the defeasibility of moral motivation in a different way from the present paper. Smith's internalism is the claim that moral judgements necessarily motivate one *insofar as one is rational*, the motivation being to make the world safe for a form of moral realism which reads moral beliefs as *beliefs about what is rational*. I suspect that problems will arise for this manoeuvre when the status of judgements of what is *rational* is in its turn confronted with the internalism/externalism issue (cf. note 5 above). An externalist reading of these is, if anything, even more implausible than in the case of *moral* judgements. And it will be, to say the least, problematic, to repeat the manoeuvre and say that judgements about *rationality* motivate one insofar as one is rational. If the only salient alternative is taken of espousing a form of weak internalism *vis à vis* such judgements, I suspect Smith will prove simply to have relocated the problem of his title rather than solved it. See further my "Belief, Desire and Motivation: An Essay in Quasi-Hydraulics" in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33, 1996. All that is presently to the point is that Smith takes the cases of *akrasia* and *accidie* as reasons favouring his own rationalistic brand of internalism but they are not, if I have argued effectively, reasons for favouring this against weak internalism as here understood.
- 25 Cf. Sytsma, "Ethical Internalism and Moral Indifference", pp. 194-196.
- 26 See Michael Stocker: "Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 76, 1979, part III; Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 4-6; Smith, *The Moral Problem*, chapter 5, esp. pp. 134-135.
- 27 I have profited greatly from discussion and comments from friends at Lancaster and Zürich, in particular John Benson, John Foster, Anna Kusser, Anton Leist, Michael Hammond, Alan Holland, John O'Neill, Vernon Pratt, Klaus Peter Rippe and Peter Schaber.